

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 NIC-01 OMB-01 AID-20 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03

RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-15 USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-13

DRC-01 /164 W

----- 025625

R 211145Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 42

INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 2368

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CE

SUBJ: WILL THE HONEST COMMUNISTS PLEASE STAND UP: CP/M

IN-FIGHTING CONTINUES

REF: COLOMBO 2311

1. AFTER MONTHS OF GATHERING UNDER THE CARPET, DUST KICKED UP BY PAST WEEKS ROUND OF FAST AND FURIOUS COMMUNIST PARTY, MOSCOW-WING (CP/M) IN-FIGHTING CONTINUES TO SWIRL AROUND ALL PARTICIPANTS. TRIGGERED BY MRS BANDARANAIKE'S SEPT 14 LETTER EXPELLING CP/M GENERAL SECRETARY S.A. WICKREMASINGHE FROM UNITED FRONT (REFTEL), CLATTER OF RIVAL CLAIMS, DENUNCIATIONS, POLITBURO MANEUVERS, PRESS LEAKS, AND PARLIAMENTARY CLASHES HAS FILLED THE AIR, LEAVING STILL UNSETTLED BASIC WHO AND HOW OF COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION IN UNITED FRONT (UF) GOVT.

2. ONLY CERTAIN FEATURE OF ROW IS THAT DISTANCE HAS WIDENED APPRECIABLY BETWEEN HARD-LINERS AND PRO-UF
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FACTION LED BY HOUSING MINISTER PIETER KEUNEMAN, WITH

FINAL BREAK IN OFFING. AS SPELLED OUT IN SEPT 14
POLITBURO DECISION AND IN WICKREMASINGHE STATEMENT TO
PARLIAMENT SEPT 20, HARD-LINER POSITION IS TO ACCEPT
EXPULSION FROM UF COALITION BUT TO CONTINUE SUPPORT AND
COOPERATION WITH "PROGRESSIVE AND SOCIALIST MEASURES TAKEN
BY GOVT". FOLLOWING FORMAL CROSS-OVER TO OPPOSITION
BENCHES, WICKREMASINGHE TOLD NATIONAL STATE ASSEMBLY (NSA)
THAT CP/M WILL "FUNCTION AS AN INDEPENDENT GROUP", CITING
SIMILAR STAND AT TIME OF 1956, 1960, AND 1964 SRI LANKA
FREEDOM PARTY (SLVP) GOVTS. CP/M, HE STATED, WISHES
TO "MAINTAIN ITS IDENTITY AND INDEPENDENCE... WHILE
WORKING TOWARD REALIZATION OF OBJECTIVES SET OUT IN THE
COMMON PROGRAMME". IN SEPARATE LETTER TO KEUNEMAN,
WICKREMASINGHE ASKED FOR KEUNEMAN'S RESIGNATION FROM
CABINET AND HIS SUPPORT FOR PARTY POLICIES IN GOOD GRACE
AS "HONEST COMMUNIST".

3. KEUNEMAN'S OWN TACK HAS BEEN DENY IN NSA THAT
PARTY HAS BEEN EXPELLED FROM COALITION, CLAIMING THAT
ONLY INDIVIDUALS ARE INVOLVED. HE HAS ALSO SUMMONED
SEPT 22 PUBLIC MEETING OF ALL "HONEST COMMUNISTS"
TO DISCUSS MEANS OF "SAVING CP/M FROM ULTRA-LEFTISTS AND
OPPORTUNISTS" AND OF HONORING PARTY COMMITMENT TO UF.
MEETING IS EXPECTED TO REPRESENT SHOW OF KEUNEMAN'S
STRENGTH AMONG PARTY CADRES, STILL LARGELY UNKNOWN FACTOR,
AND TO ENDORSE HIS CONTINUED RETENTION OF CABINET SEAT.
WITH EACH FACTION ASSERTING LEGITIMACY OF ITS STAND,
FORMAL SPLIT MAY FOLLOW IN NEAR FUTURE.

4. WICKREMASINGHE'S CONTINUED ASSOCIATION WITH HARD-
LINERS AS CHIEF SPOKESMAN FORESHADOWS PROBABLE LINE-UP OF
PROSPECTIVE SPLIT CP/M WITH PARTYS SIX MP'S EVENTLY DIVIDED
BETWEEN OPPOSITION AND GOVT. WICKREMASINGHE IS
CLEARLY ANXIOUS TO RETAIN TIES WITH MOSCOW, TELLING NSA
THAT MOVE TO EXPEL HARD-LINERS FROM UF IS ATTRIBUTABLE
TO "ANTI-COMMUNIST AND ANTI-SOVIET FORCES". NOW THAT PARTY
CRISIS IS LEADING TO SHOWDOWN AND SEEMINGLY INEVITABLE
SPLIT, ISSUE OF SOVIET REACTION AND ATTITUDES IS SURFACING
AS MAJOR QUESTION MARK. WE HAVE UNCONFIRMED REPORT THAT
SOVIET EMBASSY IS VERY UNHAPPY WITH KEUNEMAN'S HANDLING OF
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SITUATION AND THAT SOVIET EMBASSY OFFICER IS RETURNING TO
MOSCOW FOR INSTRUCTIONS.
VAN HOLLEN

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NNN

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